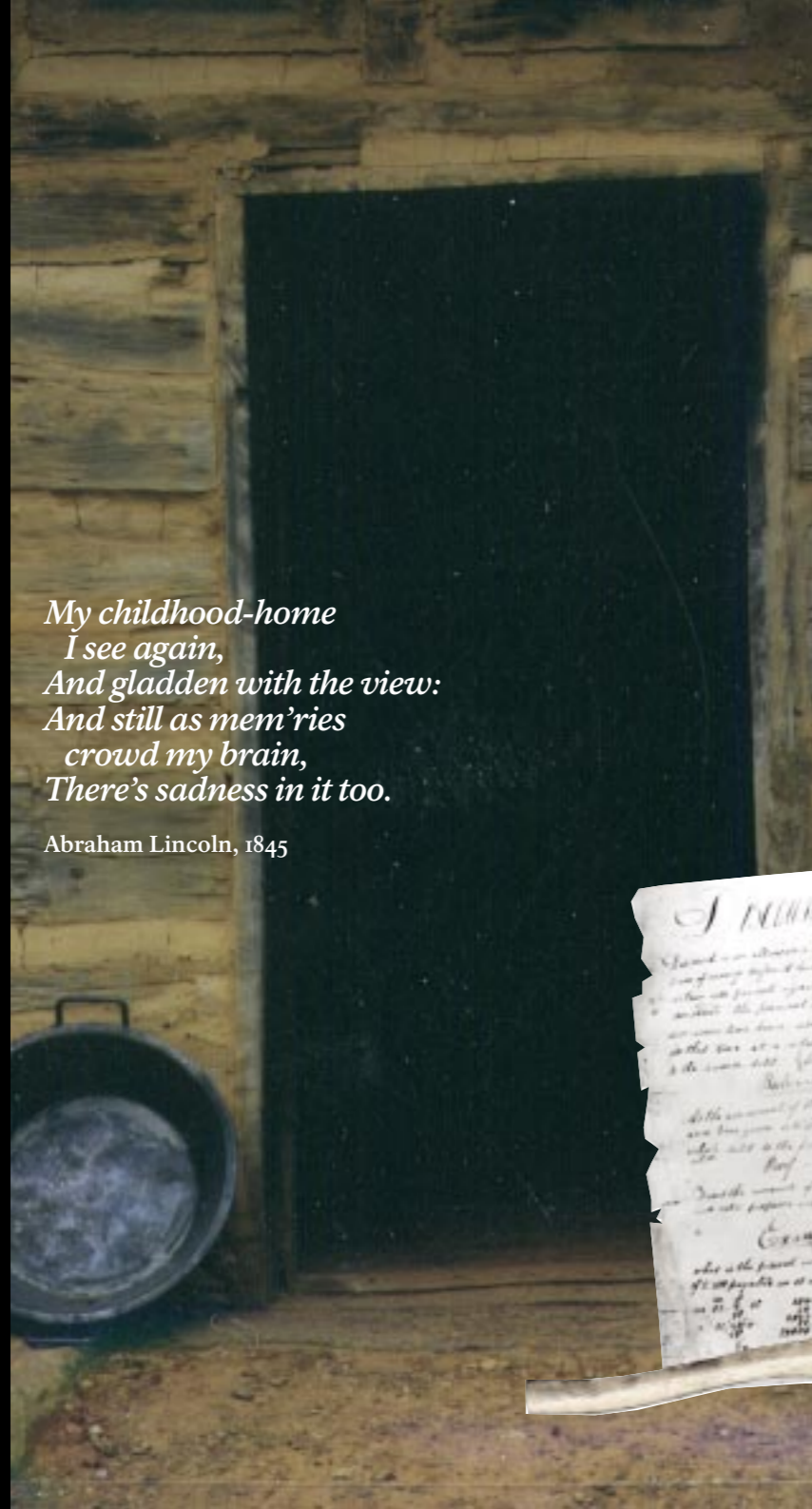




National Memorial  
Indiana  
National Park Service  
U.S. Department of the Interior

# Lincoln Boyhood



*My childhood-home  
I see again,  
And gladden with the view:  
And still as mem'ries  
crowd my brain,  
There's sadness in it too.*

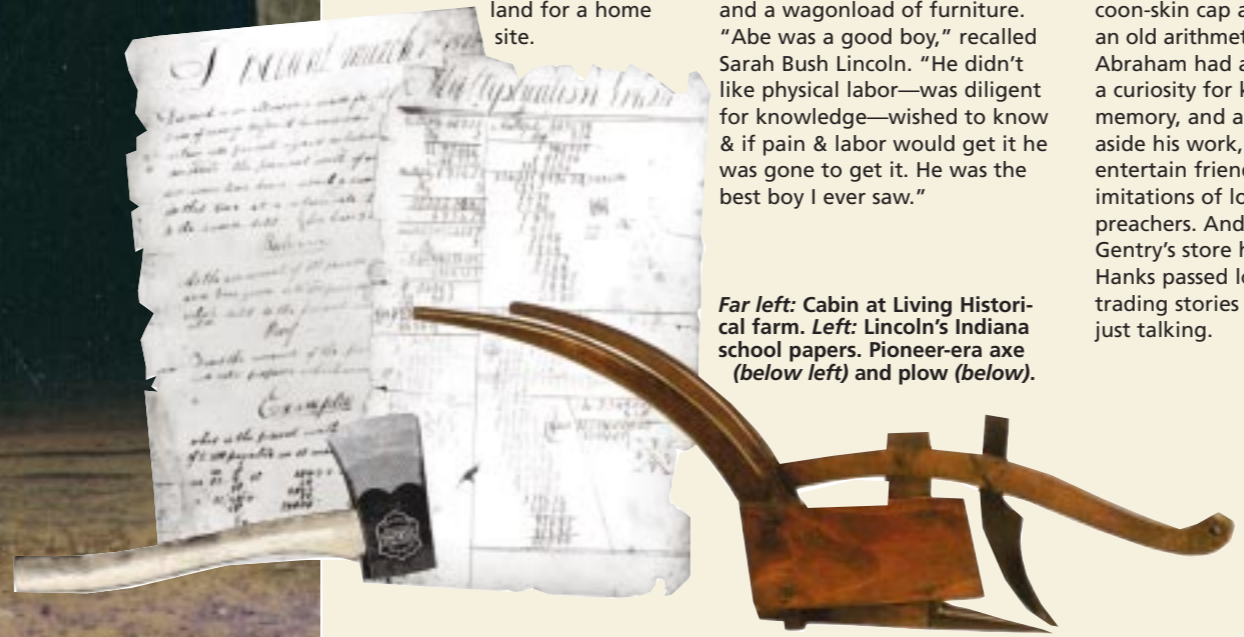
Abraham Lincoln, 1845

## “Here I Grew Up”

*My father at the death of his father, was but six years of age; and he grew up, literally without an education. He removed from Kentucky to what is now Spencer County, Indiana and, in my eighth year we reached our new home.*

Abraham Lincoln wrote these words long after his family's move to southern Indiana in 1816. Abraham was born in 1809 to Thomas and Nancy Hanks Lincoln in Kentucky. Thomas Lincoln came from a long line of farming frontiersmen. Three times he had lost land in Kentucky due to title disputes. Because he could buy government land with clear title and because slavery, which he opposed, was illegal in Indiana, Lincoln looked forward to a fresh start. Sixteen miles west of the Ohio River, just south of Little Pigeon Creek in a region of towering hardwoods, plentiful game, and good water, Thomas Lincoln chose a quarter-section (160 acres)

land for a home site.



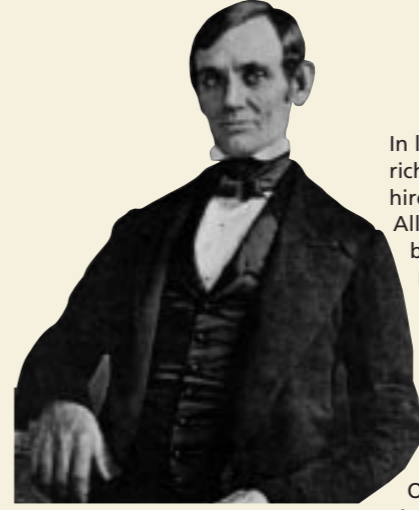
Abraham later remembered the trip to Little Pigeon Creek as one of the hardest experiences of his life. To the seven-year-old, Indiana was “a wild region, with many bears and other wild animals still in the woods.” He was large for his age and was able to help his father clear land and built a log house.

*All that I am, or hope to be, I owe to my angel mother. God bless her.*

In the fall of 1818, at age 34, Nancy Hanks Lincoln died of milk sickness. Dennis Hanks, an 18-year-old cousin whose parents also had died of the disease, lived with them now. Within a year Thomas returned to Kentucky for a visit. While there, on December 2, 1819, he married Sarah Bush Johnston, a widow he had known since before his first marriage.

Sarah brought along her own three children, aged 12, 8, and 5, and a wagonload of furniture. “Abe was a good boy,” recalled Sarah Bush Lincoln. “He didn’t like physical labor—was diligent for knowledge—wished to know & if pain & labor would get it he was gone to get it. He was the best boy I ever saw.”

Far left: Cabin at Living Historical farm. Left: Lincoln's Indiana school papers. Pioneer-era axe (below left) and plow (below).



The earliest known portrait of Abraham Lincoln, the daguerreotype above, was made in 1846.

*There was absolutely nothing to excite ambition for education.*

Abraham probably received his best formal education as a teenager at Azel Dorsey's school. Many years later Dorsey remembered that the boy came to school “arrayed in buckskin clothes, a raccoon-skin cap and provided with an old arithmetic.” By all accounts Abraham had a love of reading, a curiosity for knowledge, a good memory, and a ready wit. Laying aside his work, he would often entertain friends with jokes and imitations of local politicians and preachers. And down the road at Gentry's store he and Dennis Hanks passed long hours trading stories or just talking.



Thomas Lincoln



Sarah Bush Lincoln

In late 1828 James Gentry, the richest man in the community, hired Abe to accompany his son Allen to New Orleans in a flatboat loaded with produce. At New Orleans they sold their cargo and the flatboat and rode a steamboat back home. For his three months' work Abe earned \$24. The river voyage was the first time he encountered slavery.

On February 20, 1830, Thomas Lincoln sold his farm and moved the family to Illinois, where Abraham would spend his next 30 years. Soon after President Lincoln's assassination in 1865, the Indiana home became a much-visited memorial. Formal efforts to preserve the site began in the early 20th century with the Indiana Lincoln Union, a private group. The site became a state park in the 1940s, featuring the memorial building (now the visitor center) and the cabin site.

In 1962 Lincoln Boyhood National Memorial was established. The 200-acre site, which includes the living historical farm, is administered by the National Park Service as a place to learn about the experiences of the boy and as a memorial to the man.

## “The Milksick”

Milk sickness occurs when cattle graze on the white snakeroot, a shade-loving plant that grows throughout the south and midwest. The plant contains the toxin tremetol, poison to animals—and to humans who consume the milk products or meat of those animals.

Symptoms in humans range from nausea and vomiting to coma and death. The disease is rarely a problem



White snakeroot

today, but in early-19th century Indiana, “the milksick” was the scourge of frontier settlements. According to reports, more than half the deaths that occurred at the time in Dubois County, Indiana, resulted from milk sickness.

In the fall of 1818 milk sickness broke out in the Little Pigeon Creek settlement. Several of the Lincolns' neighbors succumbed to the disease, and in late September Nancy Hanks Lincoln fell ill. She died on October 5 and was buried in the community's hilltop graveyard.